

Conversation with 114 year old black male, Florida (Transcription)

Begin M24 B(3)

I be <unintelligible text>, born'd in Richmond, Virginia, a slave and brought to Savannah, Georgia, my people been sol' and dey didn't sell me now, we was give ... six of us was give to our owners. We was owned in Baxley, Georgia. (Baxley, Georgia?) Yes'm, by <unintelligible text> and <unintelligible text>. So we stayed dere 'till two years, slave, and after we was freed dey turnt us uh loose. (Do you remember what year that was?) Well, I can't get right straight to de years, 'cause I woodn't tell you, but it was way back dere. (A long time ago?) Yes'm ... And uh, so when dey freed us, I stayed home wid my owners, the Ward's until I was sixteen years old. And I left dem and went to Africa and stayed two year. (That's how you got your last name Ward?) Yes'm. (I see.) That's where I got my <unintelligible text> name. I'm got dey name now, and ain't goin' to change it. And so, when, Africa, come back, we stay in Africa two year and come back to United State. I marry. And I stayed dere, and I sol' out, worked dere about seventeen year and I sol' out to a man named <unintelligible text>, for \$6,000.

(This is a paper dated Dec. 29, 1968 on your 106th birthday, right? So how old does that make you today?) ... Today, I'm 114 years old. (114 years old?) This coming Christmas mornin' I be 115. I been in Seville 59 years, Seville and Palatka and ovah dere at ol' man Cowart's. I work for 'ol man Cowart when he didn't have narry niggah, but me. And when his daddy come here, I was here. Right chere in Seville. (Been here a long time!) Yes'm. (You say you have a brother that is older than you are?) Yes'm. (How old is he?) He's 128.

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(128, my goodness!) What do you attribute you long life to?) Jesus. (Jesus.) That's right. And when I come here dey will

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tell yah, dere wodn't a meaner niggah in de worl' den I was ... He pay dat niggah to jump on me and I whipped him. (He did?) Yeh, he show pay him ... Now you tape dat now if you can. (OK) and den you get de history of me. (So your Volusia County's oldest resident?) Yes'm. (You recieved a birthday greeting from Robert M. Ball, Fed. Commissioner of Soc. Sec. Admin. oh Xmas day. You've been a Seville resident for 55 years and your first 'collection was roping horses on your master's plantation in Baxley, Ga. You're a religious man that places all your faith and hope in God. The formula for your long life is Jesus, right?) (Do you remember the Civil War?) Yes'm, (Can you tell me something about it?) Well, I can tell you dis much about it, uh, my fathuh and dem toted his master from ovah here to Lester, you know where Lester, Fla. is? Dat's where dey ended the war at. Dere's a monument ovah dere. (Where they ended the Civil War?) Yes'm. So when, and uh, he came home, 'free of dem toted him, tote a piece and down a piece 'till dey got to de ol' oxen's and wagon's and dey haul him home. And uh, after he haul him home I ast him myself, ... "How you like de war?" He said, "I don't like it at all, 'cause I'm shot down." (That was your father?) No mam, that was my master. (Oh, that's your master. I see, he got shot down in the war?) Yes'm. His name <unintelligible text>. Ol' man <unintelligible text> ... He was de owner of all of em, he's de head of all of em. Just like <unintelligible text> dere owned a whole crowd here and he was de oldest one and he de boss ... if yuh see de paper where I spoke at over in Daytona. (What did you speak on in Daytona? I didn't see that.) Well, it uh, my subject was about my religion and different ting, my age and different ting. But anything dat dey would ast me ... (My goodness, I didn't get to see that, it's interesting.)

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That's right. That makes about de eleven time that I spoke ovah dere ... 6,500 head was up there. Anybody tol' me dere was a place ovah dere hol' dat many people, I woodn't 'bleved it. (You didn't know there was a place that big?) No. (I see you in the paper on your birthday a lot.) I been on six countries. I been where Mr. Nixon went behind de Iron Curtain, but dey didn't 'llow us dere but only fough hours. When Mr. Nixon was uh, President, I much got all of that, I got all my gold certificates and everything right here. (That's interesting!) Spoke in Tallahassee, befo' de Gov'nor, Mr. Rubin Akew, I spoke five thousand and five hundred head of people was dere, and so dey was puttin' up dere new place and tearin' down de ol' ... De done got it up, I think. (Is that a bigger place to talk?) (The Capital building, oh I see!) Yes'm, I been wid 'em seven year and so dere's lots of things that I woodn't explain 'bout the white people you know, I didn't think I was eduble to speak on dat ... and when I come from Africa I give a piece of diamond to Captain Gilligan to bring me back, sto' me up ... Six months comin' back. Six months goin'. (Was that on the ship?) Yes, on a ol' English tramp, took us six months. We loaded at Brunswick, Georgia at de AB&A Dock ... I went ovah wid a colored man carryin' all dem niggah's from de United State we could get. We shipped a ton o' em. (They were carrying them to Africa?) Yes'm. (Oh, I see. That was after the slaves were freed, they were going home?) Going back home, we called it. Didn't none of our home, but we called it our home. Our home right here, yes'm. Anyting born'd in the United State dis is his home and he should, white man or black man, should register. All of dem dat wasn't

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ey should put 'em out of de United State. That's de reason i. you foreign country is ahead of United State. All dey chillen register when dey get ol' enough, and vote, and dis President we got now is de best one evah hit de sea. (I think he's a good one, don't you?) Well, I'm telling you he's de fi'st one, he's going to be de best President dat evah hit de

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sea, and he's goin' to change, he's goin' to change tings ... He uh, dey start you know, and I's following dem, and when, last meeting I met was in Tallahassee, and uh, Mr. Akew and all of 'em ast de President, he say why don't you give up your resignation. He said he wadn't gonna do it. He cussed. Fi'st President I ever here'd cuss over de radio. (Was this President Nixon?) Yeah, Nixon ... He take eve'y damn one of us and carry us back to Washington and pay dem people off ... See dey free, dis man is be turn't loose right away. You seen it on de radio. (What do you think about President Nixon, do you think he was guilty?) Well, uh, now listen, that's a little bit more touchy question you ought not to ast me. (Alright, I won't ask you that. What do you think of President carter?) Me? Why I tink, I tink, I spoke for 'em, voted for 'em, worked for 'em. (You think that people don't get out and vote enough?) Listen here, I wanna tell you sum'in. There's 80% of our people dat ain't registered ... and uh, I tink de law, should pass a law, I know colored men, and white men, ol' 50-60 years ol' men, dey ain't never registered, never voted atall. Now you know that's not right. (No cause it's our right of being free and you know a lot about that, don't you?) That's right, Yes'm. (They can't remember what its like to be free.) I tink on down de line, I tink dis President, uh, bring dem all into it ... de knowledge of what you ought to do. (Cause I think that

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people will trust him and they'll want to get out and do the right thing.) Well, now, I'll tell you, some people, you know it's hard, but you got to lead 'em to it, wid the righteous people, with Jesus too, you got to lead 'em to it. I tink it's uh, you give him a little time, he's done more right at once than ary President we ever had, and I've voted for every President and started to vot'n I's vot'n fo' ol' Hans Cleveland. (Cleveland?) Yes'm. They paid all the niggahs so much to sing a song, I was in it: "Cleveland got elected just as we expect'd. Climin' up da golden stair, don't you hear de darkies singin', sweetly, I declare." (You still remember it, eh!) Oh, yes'm ... I got all dem tings down. An' uh, my master, when my mother died, I wadn't but, one year and six months ol'. And <unintelligible text> took me

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and raised me. Right up wid her chillun and everyting. And uh, when her boy Charles suck one titty... I suck de other. And everytime I'd pinch 'em, you know, ... so he quit, so dey took me. (Was she a black lady?) No mam! (She was a white lady?) Dats right. (Was she your master's wife?) Yes mam. I was raised right in de house wid them. (That was good of her to do that.) Well, you see, she, they wanted me. I was smart round de house and keep clean and tote wood, and ring de bell and dey'd make me mad and I'd go out and ring de bell fough time for de hands to come in ... well, she'd whip me, put me 'cross the barrel. (Across the barrel?) Yes'm. (Becuase you were not suppose to ring the bell? No, I'd, they'd do som'in' to me in the house ... and I'd slip out and go out the back, make no difference what time it was, so one mornin' 'bout nine o'clock, Charles and John jumped on me and dey beat me, I went to de house and tol' <unintelligible text> 'bout it, so she called me and give dem a whippin' and dey run away and went to dere uncle's house ...

tape M24 B continues beyond this point, no transcript.